

2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report

May 2, 2005

In response to stakeholders' requests to integrate and coordinate related grant programs, State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) staff consolidated programs, making up to \$138,000,000 available in one grant funding cycle. The State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance administered the 2003 Consolidated Grants and allowed those seeking grant funding to submit a single application for consideration in up to eight different grant programs. The process also required State Water Board staff to coordinate with partner agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Bay-Delta Authority, Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and Resources Agency.

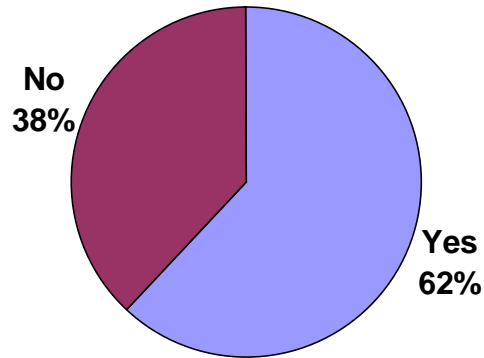
The goal of consolidation was to reduce application efforts, reduce duplication, and leverage resources by partnering with other agencies. This new process of consolidation has its benefits and challenges for both the applicants and partner agencies involved in grant advertisement, review, and selection.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the Consolidated Grants process, we surveyed the applicants and those who reviewed the grant applications, including our partner agencies. This report summarizes the applicant survey results. The survey sample includes applicants who did and who did not receive funding as a final outcome of the application process. The applicant survey results reflect a 25% response rate that encompasses a variety of opinions. For some applicants the benefits were numerous; for others, consolidation complicated the grant application process. We received significant feedback regarding the Grant Agreement process in response to the question, "What is your #1 suggestion for the SWRCB to improve future grant allocation cycles." Many applicants selected for funding indicated the Grant Agreement process was protracted and cumbersome.

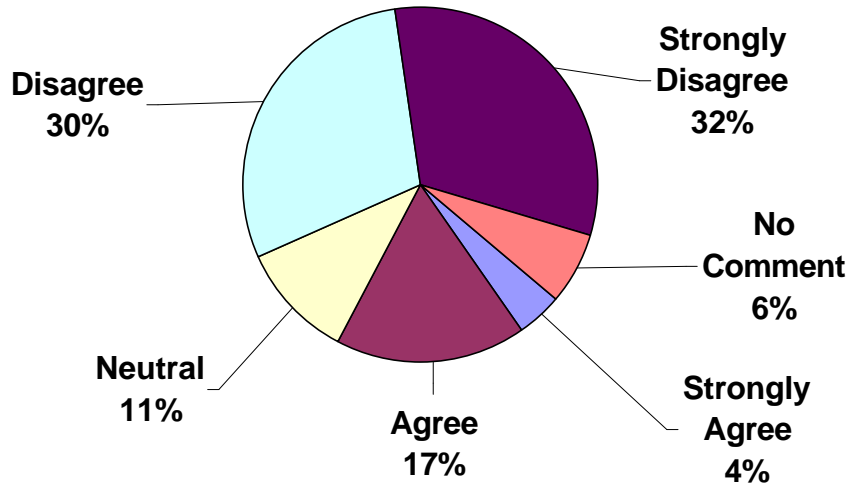
Prior to the survey's completion, several changes to the Division's grant administrative process were implemented, such as the development of guidelines for each Request for Proposal (RFP) and the release of a new online system to expedite the grant process. Prior to the release of an RFP, guidelines are developed in coordination with partner agencies and stakeholders, allowing for public input prior to formal adoption. The guidelines contain specific evaluation criteria for the grant program(s). In addition, a new online system called the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) was released in 2004. FAAST allows applicants to apply for some of the Division's financial assistance programs online and facilitates the review and selection of applications.

2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

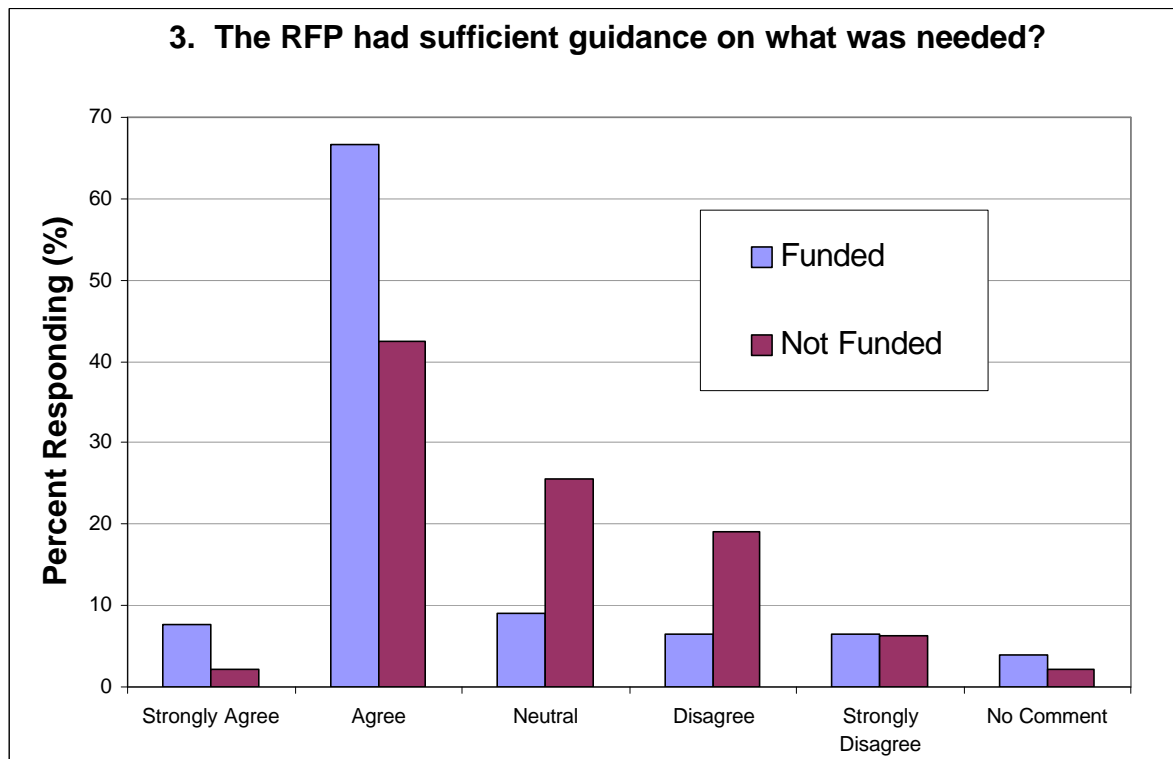
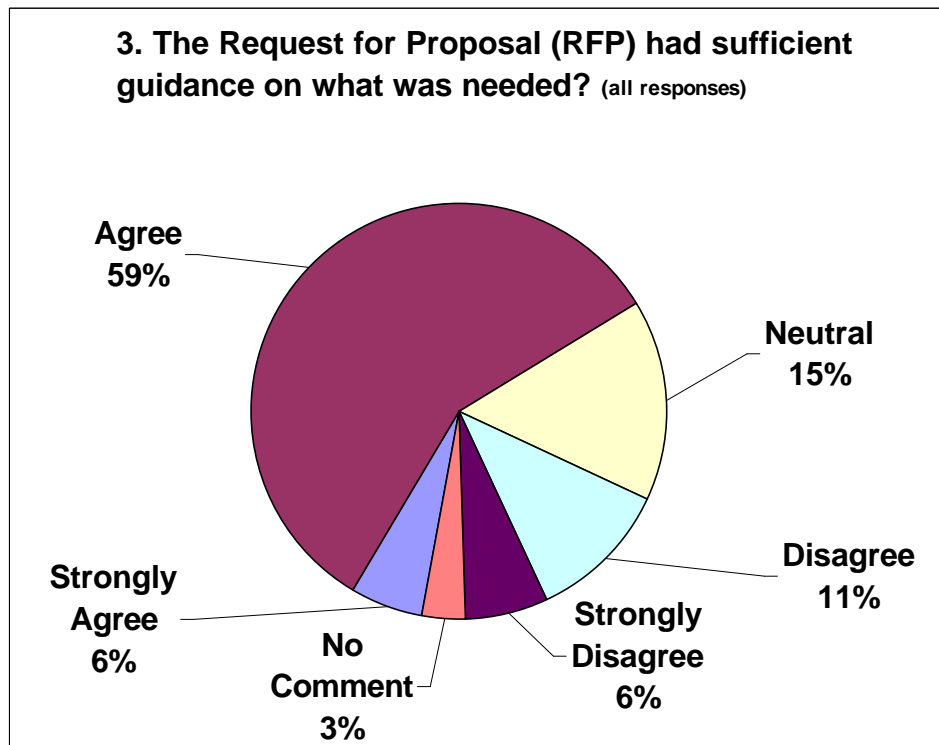
1. Was your grant application selected for funding?



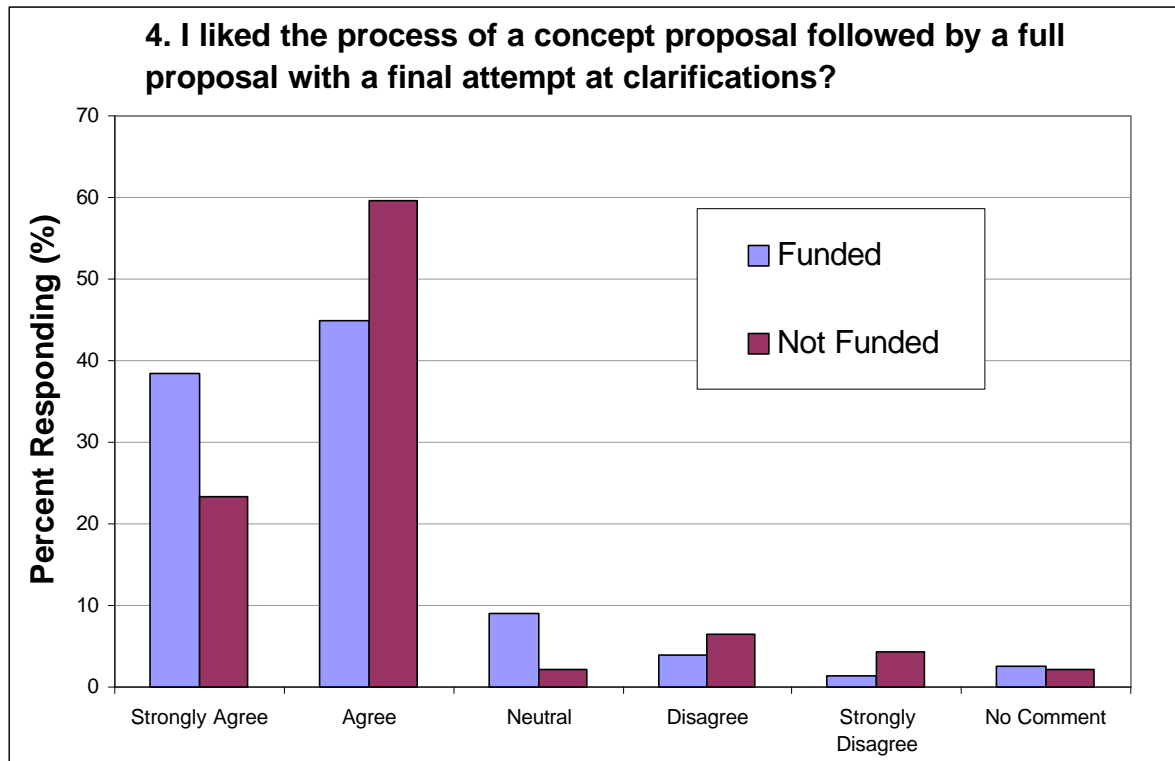
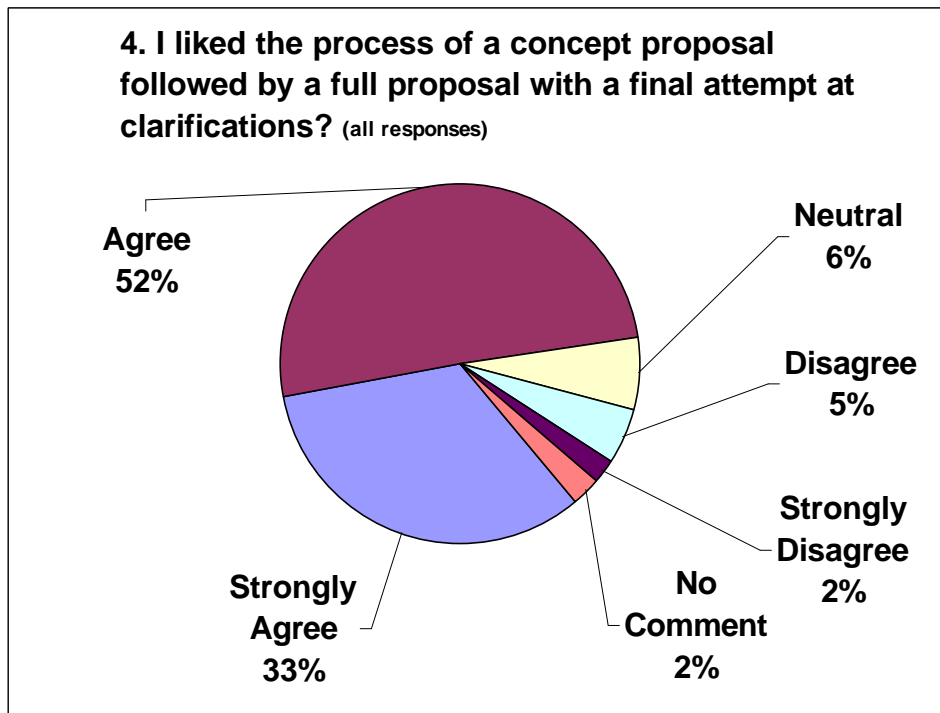
2. If your grant application was not competitive, you were adequately informed why it was declined? (responses from applicants not funded only)



2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005



2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

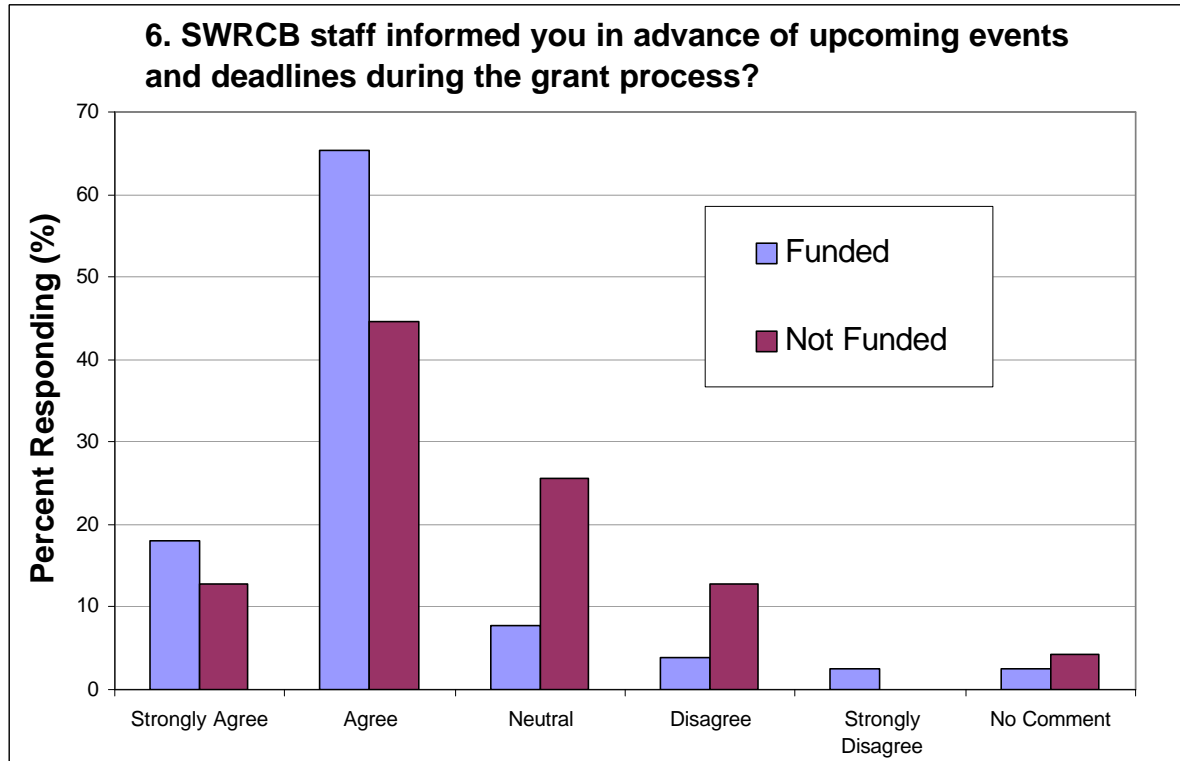
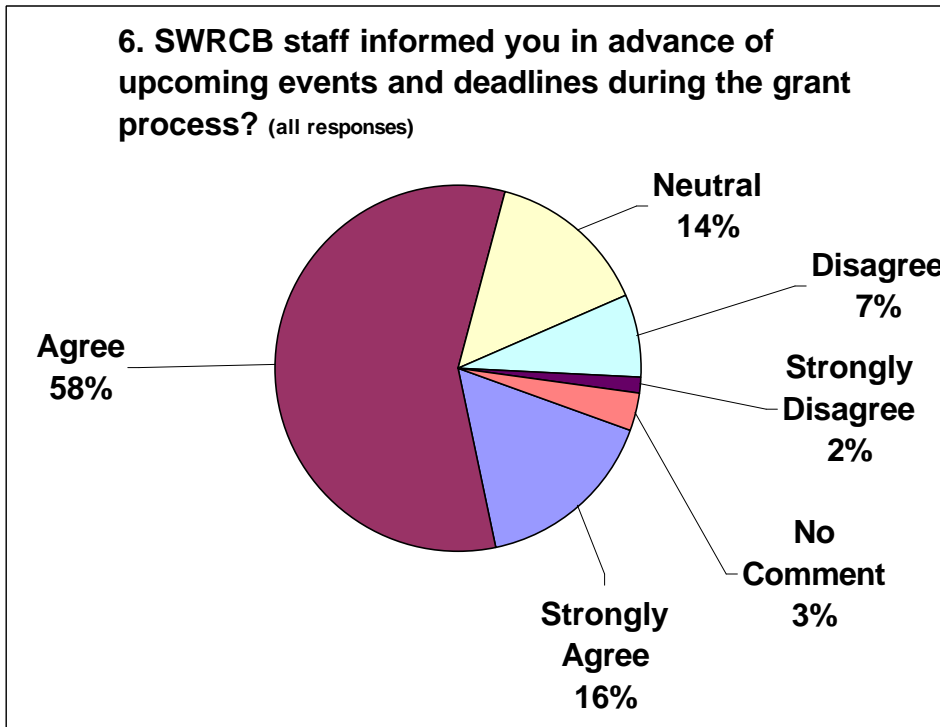


2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

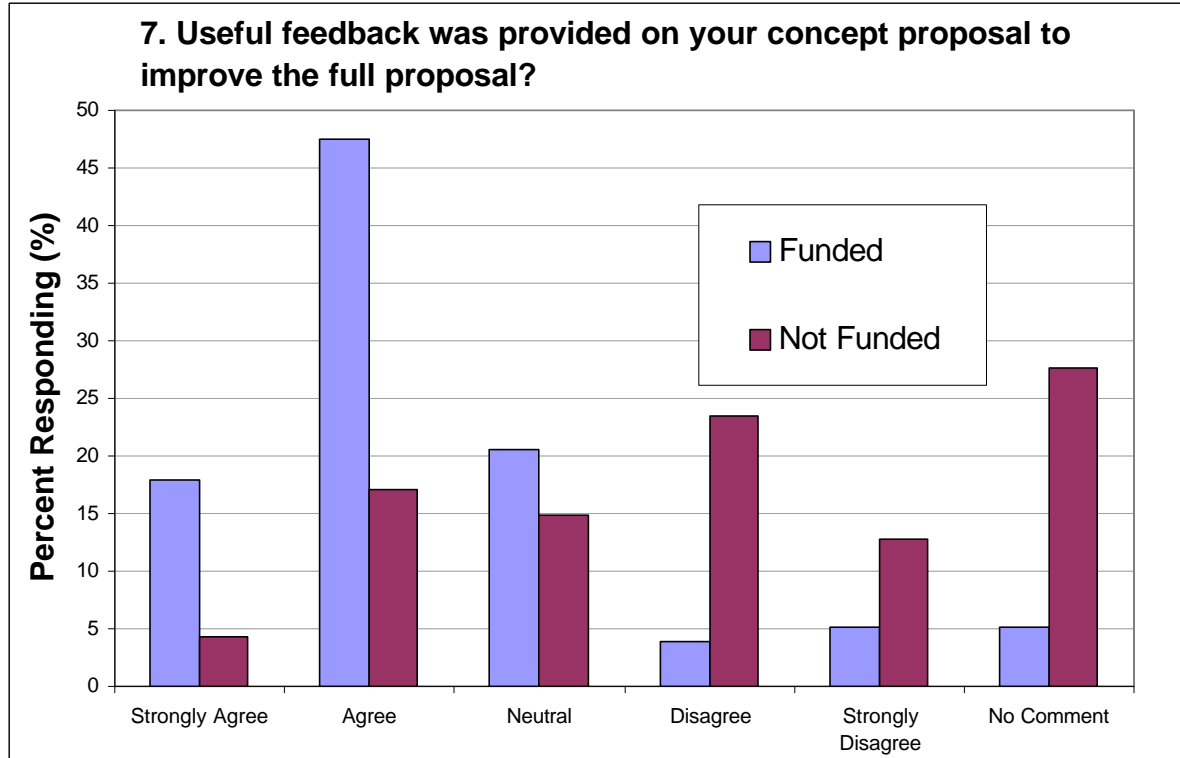
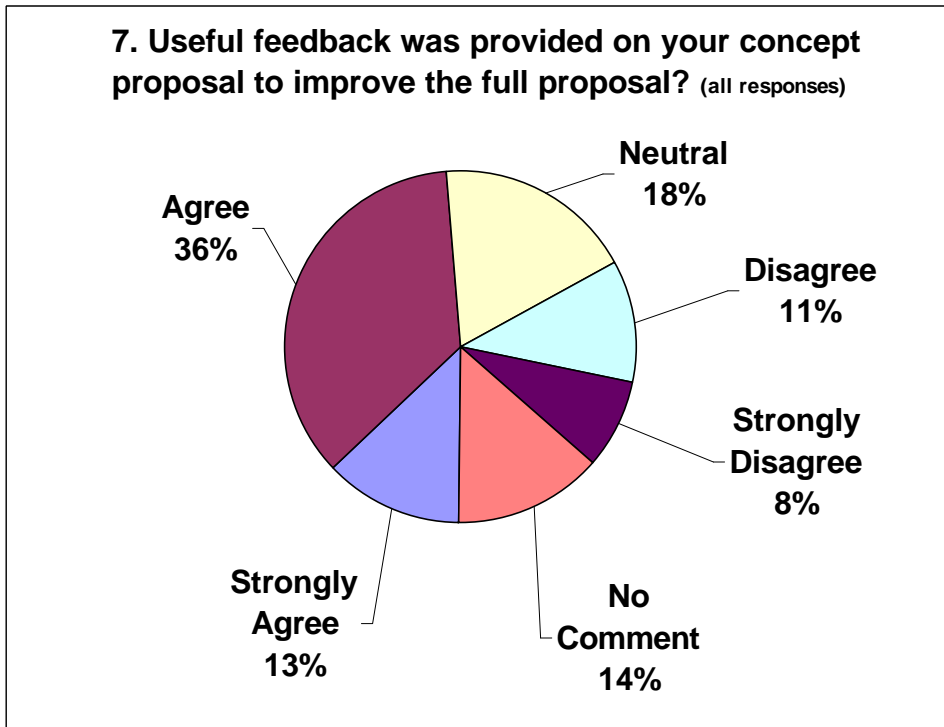
5) Please provide comments on the Application Process (from funded and not funded applicants):

- The timeline to apply for the 03 consolidated grants RFP was very short, and if we wanted to apply for more than one grant it was extremely hard to meet the deadline.
- We were accepted to complete a 2nd application. Due to time constraints we were not able to submit the full application. While we were told that we would have a high likelihood for funding, as a small non-profit we were not able to complete the lengthy application.
- We were first told to meet CALFED objectives then told to meet SWRCB objectives. The entire process was obscure and frustrating. We first applied for the funds in 2003. It is now almost 2 years later and we have not received funding.
- The decision to make the applicant combine proposals then not fund all of the grant, instead split it back was very frustrating.
- Any time a file format is specified, PDF files should be accepted. They are more likely to look the same on any computer.
- Consider shortening the concept proposals to be very short - no more than 4 to 5 pages.
- It was a good idea to have a scope ready for contracting, but it should be clear that a project will not fail based on scope.
- Application process was fine; contract negotiation was (a challenge).
- New system using the web is much improved - suggest all future grants use this process.
- We felt that the application process was clear and efficient.
- Good process with helpful assistance from Regional and State Board staff.
- The process was normal.

2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

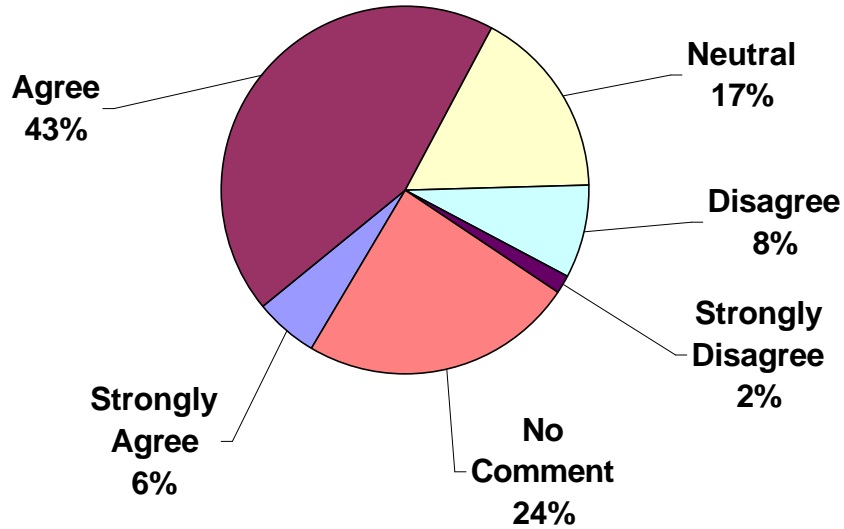


2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

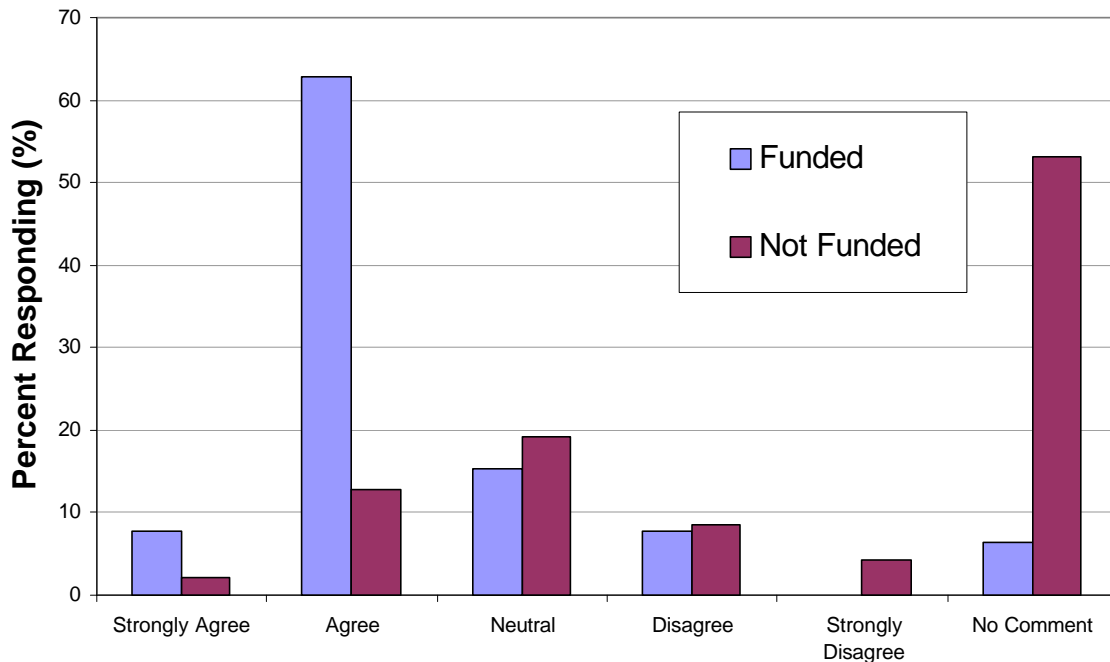


2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

8. Once your concept proposal was invited back, adequate time was provided to develop your full proposal? (all responses)



8. Once your concept proposal was invited back, adequate time was provided to develop your full proposal?

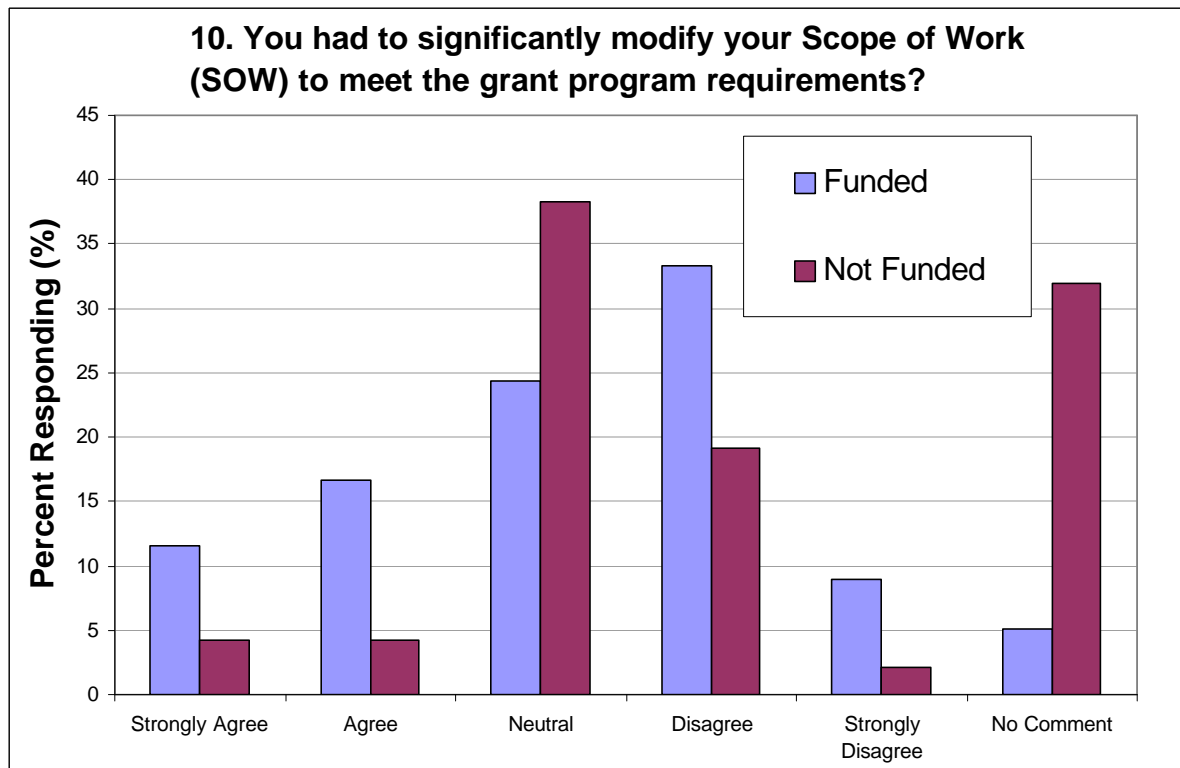
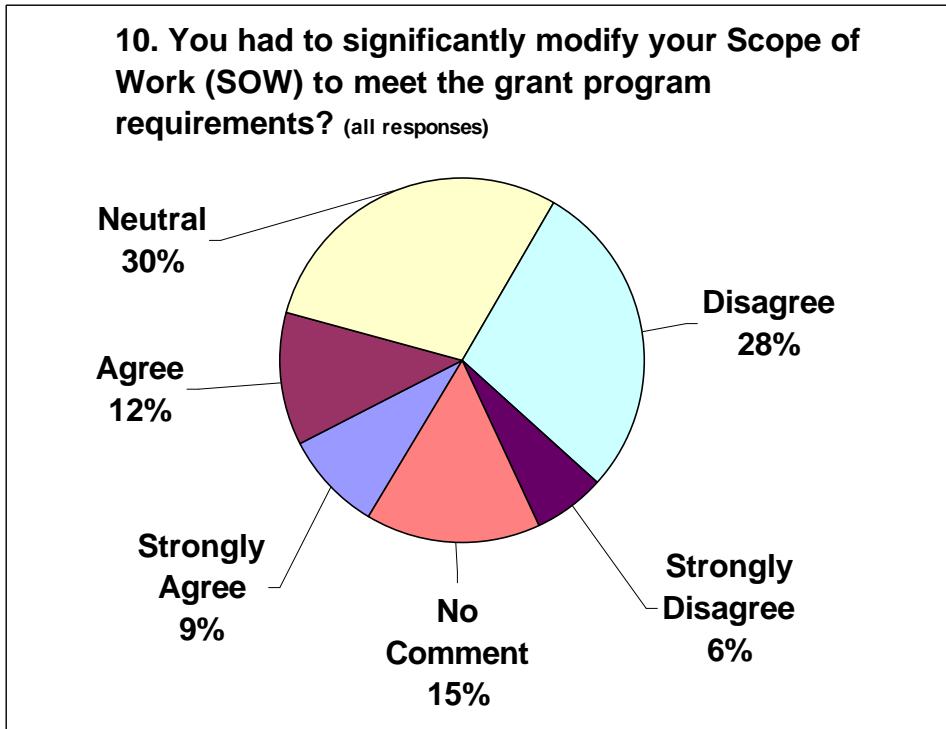


2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

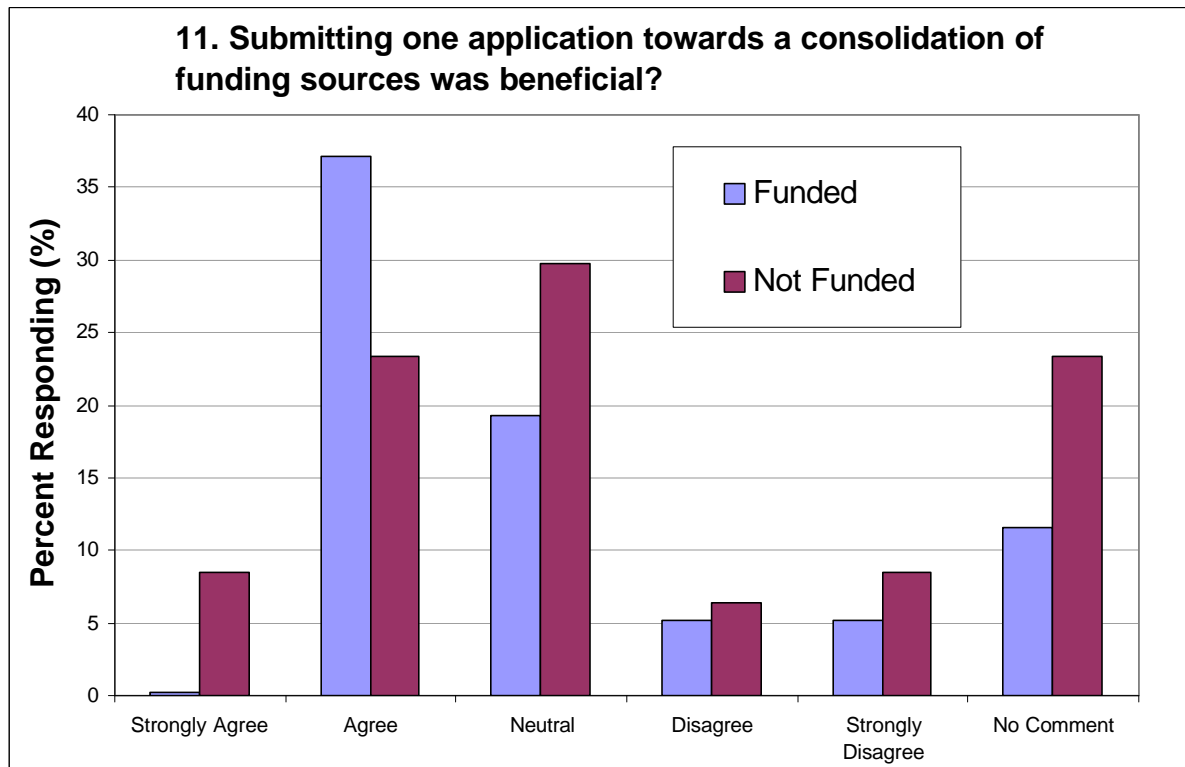
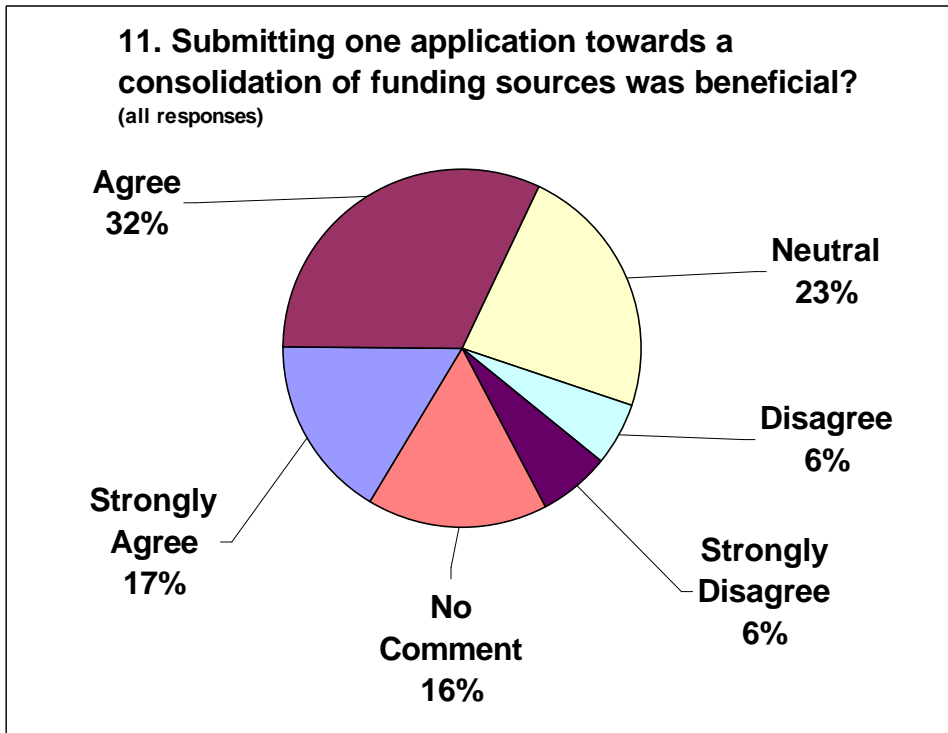
9) Please provide comments on the Review and Feedback Process (from funded and not funded applicants):

- Feedback tended to be an exercise in jumping through hoops rather than improving the scope of the investigation.
- Huge time periods with no explanation. Contracts were delayed over a year without backing up the end deadline so we lost a year of program. Unorganized, confusing and seemingly random process.
- Since we were asked to combine unlike projects into one full proposal, due to the limit on the number of pages, the reviewers found it difficult to analyze the projects.
- The timeline chart was very useful.
- We have been pleased with the State's improvements / standardization of full proposal formatting.
- RWQCB staff was quite helpful during the first review and feedback process. RWQCB staff and EPA staff were helpful during the second round of review and feedback.

2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005



2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

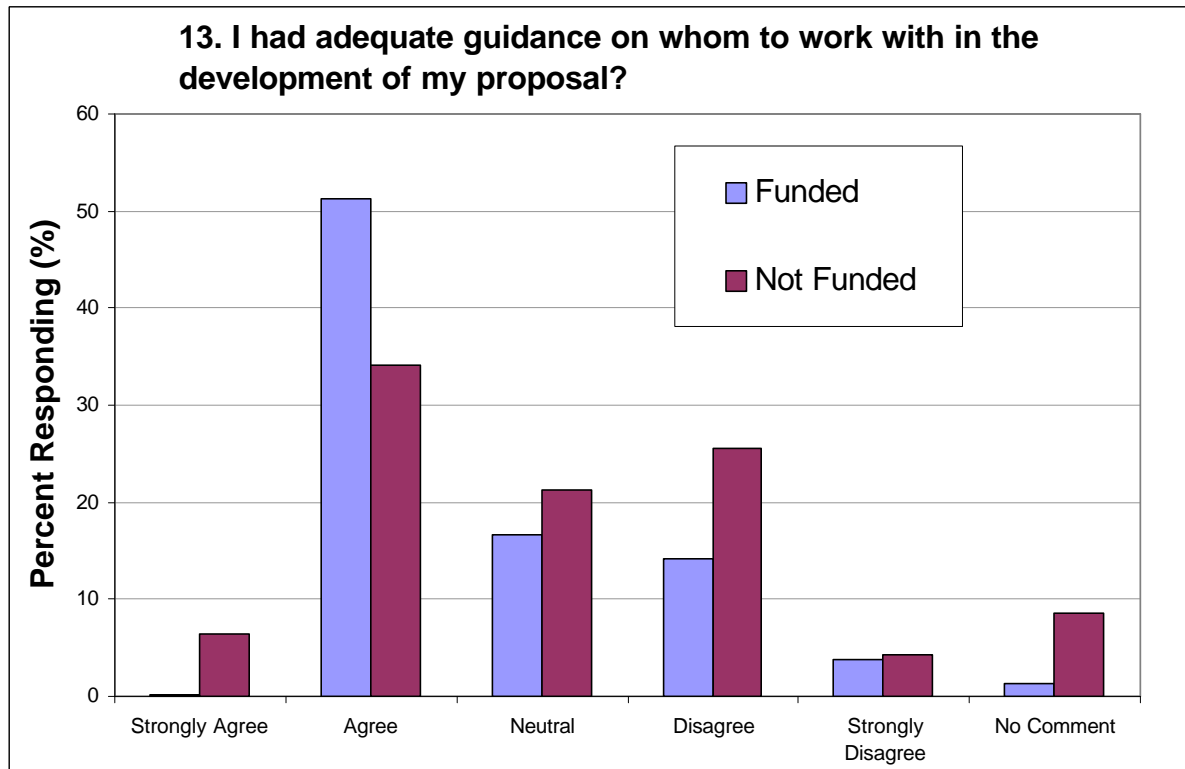
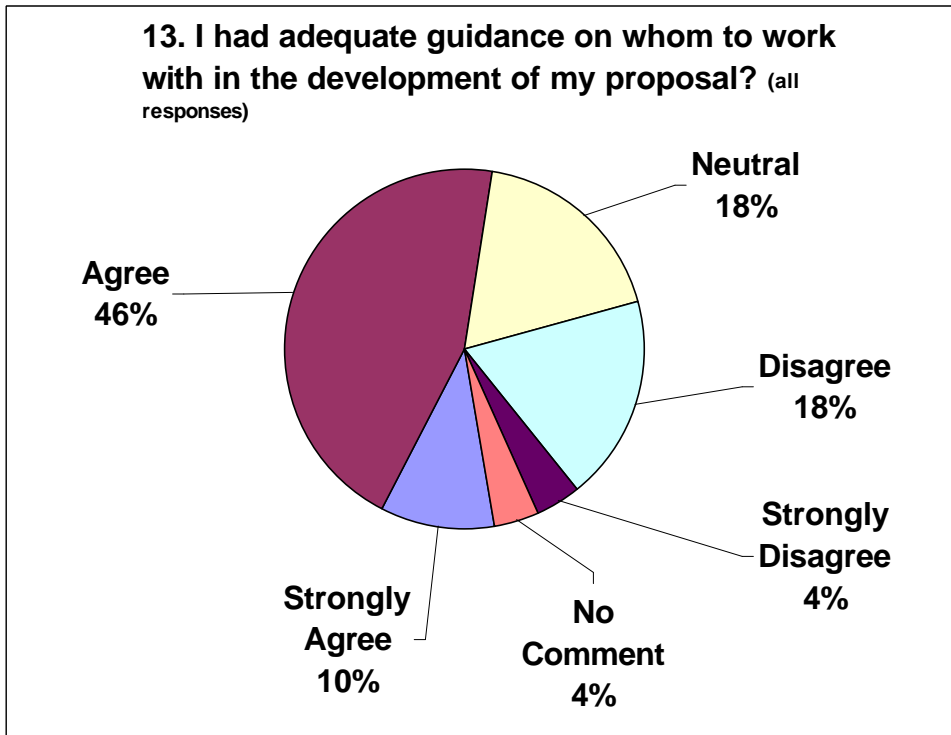


2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

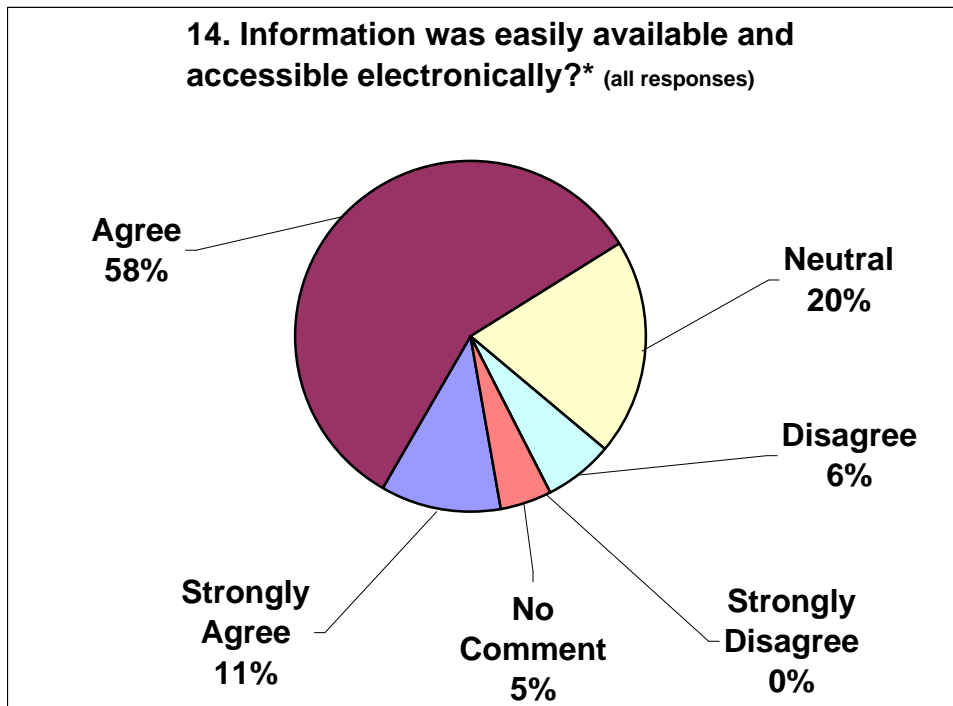
12) Please provide comments on funding sources (from funded and not funded applicants):

- CalFed guidance was great. SWRCB being involved in managing CalFed program grants is NOT a good idea.
- The funding rules changed through the process and this was a significant disappointment.
- Submitting for consolidated funding worked well except that it was hard to sort out the details of the various programs. I would favor it only if it realizes important benefits for the State (i.e. was it easier for you to administer?)
- I would not have applied under the program from which we received funding.
- Being able to use one process to apply for multiple pots was great.
- This was a more effective use of everyone's time. Good idea.

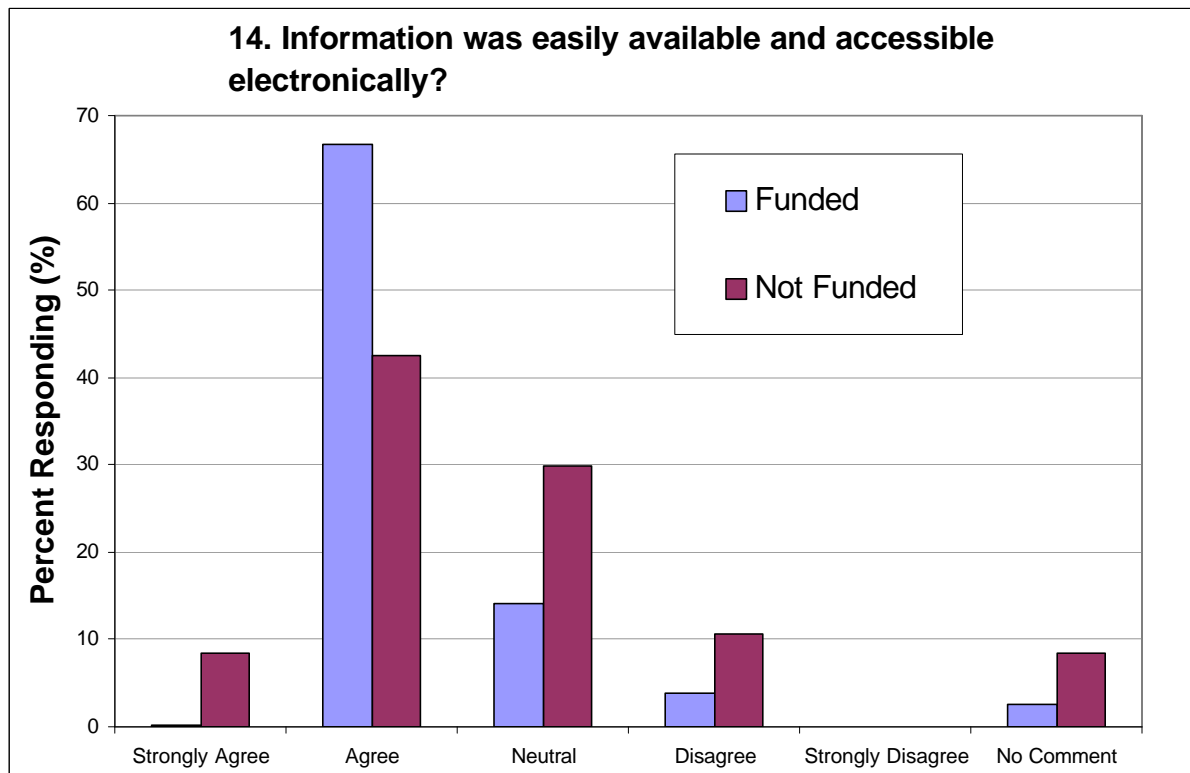
2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005



2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005



* Since the 2003 Consolidated Grant Process, an online system has been initiated to facilitate grant application submittal and review.



2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report
May 2, 2005

15) What is your #1 suggestion for the SWRCB to improve future grant allocation cycles?
(Please explain) (from funded and not funded applicants)

- My biggest concern is once the grant is allocated, the time between the notification you received the grant and agreement or contract is outrageously long. Let me repeat this, outrageously long.
- I love the pre-application before full proposal process.
- Give additional feedback if projects are placed under a different program than they were submitted for. Be timely with the agreement following the award of the grant.
- Have the proposal format closely match the Agreement format so that successful proposals can be quickly turned into Agreements.
- Make sure that CALFED staff are more accessible to the applicants. At least one meeting for each application round would have been very helpful. This was problematic for us, since the Regional Board staff person did not have all the answers.
- It takes too long to get the money; I'm already a year behind schedule.
- Speed up the award and contracting processes. By the time a contract is in place, some projects have to be compressed into a shorter time-frame to meet the grant funding cutoff dates since these processes take so long.
- More weight should be given to regional staff recommendations perhaps to the extent of allocating funding to regions.
- Use the web and a web application process in future. Cut out some of the tedious forms and solicit the information on-line. Provide early notice of future RFP's. 2004 solicitation process was a vast improvement.
- Have a standardized application form patterned off of USDA/EPA or SEAGRANT. Objectives, Background/Significance, Methods/Quality Assurance should be the primary headings.
- Get agreement with legal and finance before grants are approved; applications shouldn't have to be significantly modified during contracting.
- It was confusing and disheartening to bounce back and forth between CALFED and SWRCB. We heard one thing from CVRWQCB, another from CALFED, and another from SWRCB (which trumped them all).
- The agreement requirements are WAY!!!! too detailed. It makes applying for and implementing a grant nearly impossible.

2003 Consolidated Grants Applicant Survey Summary Report

May 2, 2005

- Not allowing indirect costs in the final grant after the costs initially had been submitted and approved in the competitive process has been extremely frustrating. I can only hope the state legislature addresses/reconsiders this decision in the future.
- There needs to be a better distribution of funds. The Sierra is the headwaters for the majority of the water for California, but there were very few projects funded in that region.
- It has taken well over two years now from submission to get the proposal into a viable grant agreement for our project! We will be three years out when the project can begin during the summer construction season. This protracted timeline was not expected.
- Reduce the amount of time to get contracts in place. It took 6 months from awarding of grant until the SWRCB contacted us. We are still waiting for signed contract.
- Provide clear instructions on funding and format requirements. Frequent changes in SWRCB funding and format requirements and grant template made it difficult to finalize grant agreement and each change required associated changes in supporting documents.
- Take the directive to utilize grant agreements rather than contracts a little more seriously. The intent, I believe, was to make the process easier, yet other than a few language changes, there have really been no measurably effective changes.